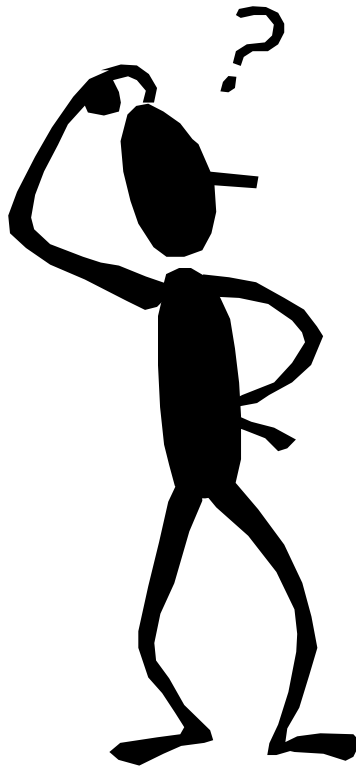


How to Become a Mentor



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What is a Mentor Anyway?

Responsible mentoring is a structured one-to-one relationship or partnership that focuses on the needs of a young person. Mentoring fosters caring and supportive relationships, encourages young people to reach their fullest potential, and helps them develop their own vision for the future.

A mentor is an adult who, along with parents, provides young people with support, counsel, friendship, guidance, reinforcement and constructive example. Mentors are good listeners; people who are responsive and caring and want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there.

Kids don't care about a lot of things - like how much money you have, what you look like, or if you don't always say just the right thing. What kids do care about is that you are there, spending time with them. They care that you are their very own trusted friend.

Getting Started

Think about how you want to work with a young person and consider these tips:



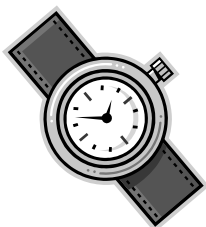
What activities interest you

... helping youth in developing a specific skill, pursuing an interest, learning about a subject, or just getting to know them and being their friend. Then think about organizations in your community that might have mentoring opportunities that match your interests.

Your enthusiasm for a particular activity is as important as the activity itself. In the long run, being around an adult who is enthusiastic and motivated helps kids value and pursue their own interests throughout their lives.

The age and number of youth you want to work with

... elementary, middle school, or high school age children; one youth or several—for example, mentoring one child one-on-one versus coaching a group of young people.



The amount of time you have for a youth

... once a week? Once or twice a month?

It is important to be realistic about the responsibilities involved with mentoring a young person. If you are not sure about mentoring a young person for at least six months, consider trying a shorter-term volunteer opportunity.

Keep in mind, however, what one mentor told us ...

"You don't know in advance how rewarding it is going to be, so you are worried about the responsibility of giving your time consistently. The irony is that once I starting doing it, I didn't want to miss a session."

What organizations in your community interest you?

There are many volunteer and mentoring organizations across the country. Look for one with other adults who share your commitment and values.

Use your personal contacts

- Talk to family and friends who volunteer.
- Ask someone who handles community affairs or charitable contributions at your office.
- Talk to your minister, rabbi, priest, or someone who handles community outreach where you worship.
- Ask organizers and other members of service clubs, civic groups, fraternities, sororities, or professional associations you belong to.

